

COMMENTARY

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With this issue the Journal of Field Ornithology adopts a new design and a new format. These changes reflect significant changes in the journal's present and anticipated audience and in its place among American ornithological journals.

In recent years the Journal has received an increasing number of articles based on research done wholly or in part in the neotropics, frequently with authors or co-authors from Central or South America. Most ornithologists are aware of how little we know about birds of the neotropics, how many species live in or migrate to this zoogeographic region, and how pressing is the need for knowledge of the area's flora, fauna, and ecology in order to preserve its biological riches. Spanish is the dominant language of the region. By including Spanish titles and abstracts of all articles appearing in the Journal of Field Ornithology the Association of Field Ornithologists hopes to encourage communication among all ornithologists working in the Americas. We hope that increased communication will stimulate increased research in the neotropics and increased recognition of the serious problems facing this region's wildlife.

The new cover design preserves the tern which has been the symbol of the Journal and its parent society for 50 years, but the design also emphasizes the importance of a hemispheric view of ornithology. Terns and many other species that breed throughout the North American continent migrate to and winter in Central and South America. Our interest in the biology of birds necessitates that we be concerned with all areas frequented by birds and that concern is suggested by the hemispheric map over which the tern flies.

All papers appearing in the Journal will be formatted as articles. The changed format does not indicate the elimination of notes. The change recognizes the importance of brief studies and serendipitous field observations. With the change in format the Journal emphasizes the value of a succinctly stated scientific idea or observation by not consigning it to the fine print at the back of the Journal. Additionally, concise articles typeset in a format that is easy to read will encourage readership. One can read a short article over morning coffee and come away with a complete idea, whereas the long paper is put aside for that spare evening's study that never comes. Finally, short papers can be evaluated quickly by referees, published quickly, and therefore can be more current than long papers. With the latter advantage in mind, the Journal of Field Ornithology will accept only manuscripts with 10 or fewer text pages. The page limit will allow the editorial staff and referees to minimize the time from submission to publication thereby making the Journal

more responsive to its authors and audience and, with short publication delays, provide the potential for the exchange of ideas in the pages of the Journal.

Despite these changes the Journal of Field Ornithology remains committed to the study of birds in their natural habitat and the development of new techniques in field ornithology. We also remain committed to the vision of the society's early members, among them Margaret Morse Nice, who recognized the important contributions to be made by dedicated amateurs. Ornithology is a twentieth century science. DNA hybridization, computer analysis, and multivariate statistics have become important tools of scientific ornithology, but new, complex, and often expensive techniques should not blind us to what we can learn from the thoughtfully posed question followed by critical field observations. Such questions and observations may be made by professional scientists or knowledgeable amateurs. The Journal remains committed to both.—Edward H. Burtt Jr., Editor.